

21/12/2020 Hand of the Week 44: A Christmas Gift for you...or your opponents!

You are the only pair to bid to 3NT- if you make the contract you get 100%, if you go down you make 0% and the result depends on the first card you play from dummy! But who is going to get an early Christmas present?

South's 2♠ overall is weak showing 6-9 points and a 6 card suit.

<div>18</div> <div>D</div>		N HXPatM	<div>W</div> <div>N</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> <div>1♦</div> <div>2♠</div> <div>2NT P</div> <div>3NT P</div>	
<div>W</div> med029 <div>♠ K1054</div> <div>♥ A83</div> <div>♦ J10842</div> <div>♣ 8</div>		<div>♣ 6</div>	<div>E</div> Erika Pick <div>♠ J2</div> <div>♥ KQ9</div> <div>♦ AK765</div> <div>♣ Q105</div>	
		S hxrexajm		
			3NT W NS: 0 EW: 0	

You will pick up 9 tricks in diamonds and hearts when you get in so the outcome will depend on your play in clubs. North must have a good reason to not lead spades. You are missing 9 cards so can guess that the suit is breaking 6-3 or 7-2

With AKJ9xx it seems likely they would lead the Ace, then a low spade with view to partner then switching back to clubs, so their holding is either AJ9xxx or AK9xxx. With the former you must play the 10♣, with the latter it is the Q♣. Lets get 2 views on the best play!

I guessed that from AKxxxx, North would play A then switch to a spade hoping partner can then lead through declarers Qxx. There seems to be a major risk of giving away a trick if you underlead AK- what if declarer holds Qxx or worse case scenario a singleton Q♣? I therefore played North for AJ9xxx and South for Kxx- I am playing 10♣.

What did Martin think? The 6♣ is probably fourth longest. If North holds AKxxxx with no outside entries they are hoping that partner can get in return the suit before declarer takes their tricks. North is hoping that the suit breaks favourably and that declarer cannot take 9 tricks off the top. South must have AQ♠ and can't have more than K♥ probably not even that. I'd punt for playing the Q♣.

So who is getting the present and who has an empty stocking?

Make you choice before turning the page!

<div>18</div> <div>D</div>		<div>N</div> HXPatM	<div>W</div> <div>N</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div>	
		<div>♠</div> 9	<div>1♦</div> <div>2♣</div>	
		<div>♥</div> J42	<div>2NT</div> <div>P</div>	<div>3NT</div> <div>P</div>
		<div>♦</div> Q93	<div>P</div>	<div>P</div>
		<div>♣</div> AK7643		
<div>W</div> med029			<div>E</div> Erika Pick	
<div>♠</div> K1054			<div>♠</div> J2	
<div>♥</div> A83			<div>♥</div> KQ9	
<div>♦</div> J10842			<div>♦</div> AK765	
<div>♣</div> 8			<div>♣</div> Q105	
		<div>S</div> hxrexajm		
		<div>♠</div> AQ8763		
		<div>♥</div> 10765		
		<div>♦</div>		
		<div>♣</div> J92		
			<div>3NT W</div> <div>NS: 0 EW: 0</div>	

Well done Martin! Let's have a quick look at the lead from North- With a singleton spade it is unlikely you are going to be able to establish the suit, but there is a good chance partner will get in at some point. Partner has 6 spades so is likely to have shortage in clubs- if they have a singleton you are only winning 2 clubs trick, so you have to hope the partner has at least 2, and the rest of the suit breaks no worse than 3-2. North isn't expecting partner to hold any honours in clubs, they are just hoping for a good suit break- if South turn up with Qx then that is an unexpected bonus.

The point to note is that North does not know declarers holding in clubs when they lead the suit.

The mistake I made was only considering the problem from declarer's point of view- try and visualise the problem from the defenders point of view and that will help your declarer play.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Hand of the week is on holiday no until 2021